

Okanogan Board of Health (BOH)
Tuesday, June 13th, 2023, 1:30 PM

These notes were taken by a County Watch volunteer. Every attempt is made to be accurate. Notes are verbatim when possible, and otherwise summarized. Note taker comments or clarifications are in italics. These notes are published at www.countywatch.org and are not the official county record of the meeting. For officially approved minutes, which are normally published at a later time, see the Okanogan County Commissioners' website at <https://www.okanogancounty.org/government/commissioners/index.php>

Present:

Lauri Jones (LJ), Board of Health Director
Mariann Williams (MW), BOH board member
Jim Wallace (JW), Health Officer
Jill Gates (JG), BOH, Secretary
Mike Harr (MH), Okanogan County Health District
Jon Neil (JN), County Commissioner, BOH Board Chairman
Andy Hover (AH), County Commissioner, BOH board member
Chuck Zimmerman (CZ), Counsel to Okanogan Public Health District
Krisha Warnstaff (KW), Okanogan Public Health District
(A representative from the Sheriff's office)

Time stamps refer to a recording available on the County Watch website. It starts 13 minutes into the meeting.

Summary of Important Discussions:

- *Okanogan and Chelan-Douglas counties will share a qualified epidemiologist*
- *Financial future rosy until at least 2029 thanks to federal funds; they'll cover Environmental Health Director's post*
- *Four Board members report on state-wide public health meeting: toxic algae, struggling Obstetric (OB) Services, opioid overdoses are biggest shared concerns; Okanogan Public Health District a model for other districts*
- *Survey to assess past six years (disaster preparedness, Covid trauma...)*
- *Three candidates applying for city Board of Health post*

Meeting opens with a mention of the epidemiologist position, shared between Chelan-Douglas and Okanogan Counties. CZ says it's okay for him to represent those two districts as a consultant but that each party should get their own lawyers. AH proposes making a recommendation to the board, with the director.

In the financial report LJ talks about services provided since last fall by Community Choice and Care Connect. AH asks about a \$3,000 entry for Family Health Centers. LJ says this is a Rural Equity Grant. Money will be spent on aquatic training for water recreation inspections.

00:00 - LJ talks about it being the first time they've been "over the (financial) threshold", owing this to the fact they had help from FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) and ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) the two previous years.

LJ: It was kind of anticipated.

AH: The State Auditor is going to do an audit.

MW: What's the difference between a normal audit and an accountability audit?

JG: An accountability audit deals with locks, who has access to what.

AH: Usually they call and we'll do an exit conference.

JN: I move to sign the audit form, or State Audit Engagement Later.

5:00 - Health Officer Update _JW: (referring to a meeting he, Director Lori Jones, Environmental Health Specialist Mike Harr and health district employee Krisha Warnstaff attended in Wenatchee to exchange with other Health Districts) A lot of concerns are shared across the state. I'm glad Mike was along. He could decipher conversations. People are having a lot of trouble with septic (*systems? regulations?*), with heat and smoke, and with algae blooms in a number of lakes. Grant County has a very robust program.

All jurisdictions are grappling with opioids, asking what the best strategies are, trying to improve reporting and surveillance systems. We've got some good strategies—regarding support networks, the number of providers—a lot of jurisdictions wish they had. The collaboration of our partners around opioid overdoses is something we're proud of—prenatal care, peri-parted care, services to newborns and families—we had good discussions with other health officials. Got an exciting assessment in the press looking at disaster (*preparedness*). We'll be connecting more with our epidemiologist consultant from Chelan-Douglas County. I just finished a conversation with rural officers seeing OB services close: Toppenish, in Yakima County, Forks Hospital in Clallam County. I was able to share our experiences with Three Rivers and North Valley in Okanogan County. Mid Valley misdoing a fantastic job right now continuing to recruit and have a pipeline in place to maintain a strong force of OB providers. Family Nurse Partnership (*is there*) for pregnant women and newborns, high risks from addiction or social conditions.

Overall it was fun to be there with Lori, Mike and Krisha. Our leadership is strong. We're recognized for that, received appreciation from bigger, more populous counties. We're responding to outbreaks of Covid. There's a low level of disease activity.

13:00 - Administrative Update

LJ: It was the first time I'd been to the WSPHA (*Washington State Public Health Association*) meeting. I met a whole breed of new people. One of the focuses is we're receiving foundational funds and must see that they're well documented. We can share a qualified epidemiologist. We're looking at updating our policy manual to make sure we're hitting areas we need to, and are up to date. We're getting a lot of money over the next years, at least until 2029. It will fund the environmental health director, so Mike's post will be fully funded. We need to free up his on-site time to free him up for directional duties.

Jeff Ketchel did regional planning, now works with foundational planning. He's asked to come back and do a workshop on that.

MW: I heard about a community assessment from North Valley assessment meeting.

LJ: We're going to hone in on what's gone on in the last six years, looking at disaster assessment. Are people more prepared or not? How Covid impacted us, also the trauma aspect.

JN: Are you considering using the health survey?

LJ: Yes. We'd love it if the school districts used that. We're talking to our Department of Health partners.

JN: You can edit that survey to eliminate certain questions.

LJ: It's been fascinating so far. We've had a presentation from the University of Washington and Central Washington University on work force development. Jim Wright is kind of famous with Kitties County. When he went to the training in Blaine (*on the coast*) they just loved him and Laura. ...I would ask and hope that commissioners are looking at the (*vacant*) city (*Board of Health*) position.

AH: We have maybe three people (*applying*) for that position.

15:00 - Environmental Health Update

MH: I was dreading the meeting but it's been amazing to network with environmental health directors. I made some good relations. The big topics were toxic algae growth and air quality. They saw a significant increase in complaints on leaks, did a lot of testing. (?) They're starting to see it in rivers, (*inaudible*) –there's only one lab that's testing. *He talks about (Okanogan Co.'s ?) air quality monitoring plan, Lynn Walker, the Tribe, "a lot of financial communication"*. MH: It's interesting that a small local jurisdiction is a model for the state. We're busy as always.

JN: Everybody's impressed with the job you're doing.

LJ: I have to rave about Mike. He was concerned the meeting was a bunch of fluff but it was an opportunity to meet with other environmental health specialists. *KW says she has never before seen funds for environmental health so this is an exciting time.*

19:00 - *Chairman Hover adjourns the meeting.*